DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 177 694 EA 012 185

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TITLE The Board and the School System Administrative Team.
PUB DATE 18 Jun 79
NOTE 7p.; Paper presented at the International Congress on Education (2nd, Vancouver, British Columbia, June 17-20, 1979)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Administrative Personnel; *Board Administrator Relationship; Board of Education Role; *Boards of Education; *Cooperation; *Decision Making; Elementary Secondary Education; *Team Administration
IDENTIFIERS *National School Boards Association

ABSTRACT

According to this paper, all parties in educational management--central office and building administrators, supervisory and curriculum personnel, as well as the board--should participate fully in the business of managing a school district. But before enacting a new policy, an enlightened board will consider the impact that the policy could have on the school system's pupils, educational programs, personnel, and budget. The paper suggests certain things board members can do to enhance a management leadership team. They can serve as agents of change, seeking advice from the entire team. They can insist that all levels of management be included in the decision-making process of the district. Finally, a board can encourage management training and skills development of school administrators. The paper concludes with a discussion of the attitude of the National School Boards Association toward involvement of administrators in all levels of policy-making. (Author/LD)

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THE BOARD AND THE SCHOOL SYSTEM ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM

A Paper by
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Delivered to
The Second International Congress on Education
June 18, 1979
Vancouver

The "administrative team" is a concept to which educational administrators and board members have been giving a rising chorus of accolades for more than a decade. While definitions vary widely, while administrative structures are diverse, and while board policies are often couched in dissimilar language, the mosaic of the "administrative team" is recognizable certainly in theory, and increasingly in practice throughout North America. It is the accepted concept in school administration today.

Participatory management is the essence of our subject this morning. As noted by Norman Hale in his work titled The Management Team,[1] teamwork is one of the strongest popular ideals throughout our continent. This has been evidenced over the past couple of centuries as groups of people have worked together "to raise barns and houses, defend wagon trains, harvest crops, and form revolutionary militia."[2] Continuing, he writes, "...people are more efficient and cooperative when working in groups that recognize the worth of each individual. In a group, responsibility and expertise are shared by all, in the finest sense of democratic traditions."[3]

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[1] Norman Hale, The Management Team (Eugene, Oregon: ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management, 1978) 36pp.

[2] Ibid., p.1. [3] Ibid.

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Well, all of that notwithstanding, you and I know that the concept -- though widely recognized -- is not universally accepted. Traditionally school systems have been organized in a hierarchical fashion. Any movement that affects "turf-dom" can be expected to meet with resistance. Still, the effort must be made if sound school administration is to prevail.

Perhaps it would be worthwhile to review a couple of the basic terms that are used in discussing the concept of participatory management.

The term "administrative team" means different things to different people, as well it should when one considers the plethora of school district characteristics throughout our nations. There is no single definition that applies to all situations. To me, however, the term "administrative team" connotes the on-going work of central office administrators, supervisory and curriculum personnel, and building administrators -- acting as an advisory and deliberative body -- to make decisions on significant issues, problems, or procedures. It succeeds to the extent that communications between and among the individual members are successful.

A more encompassing term is "management leadership team." A management leadership team includes the administrative team AND the board of directors or trustees working together in initiating, reviewing, and recommending policies for ultimate deliberation and resolution by the Board. Again, open communication between and among the various members of the team is the key to success.

With that as a background, let me turn now to the crux of the topic given to me: "The Board and the School District Administrative Team." Given the foregoing definitions, "The School Management Leadership Team" might have been a more accurate title for this presentation. Regardless, I share with you my belief that ALL parties in educational management -- central office and building administrators, supervisory and curriculum personnel, and the board -- should participate fully in the business of managing the school district. This is not to say that each member of the team has equal powers and responsibilities. The ultimate responsibility for policy development belongs to the board. Period.

But before enacting a new policy, an enlightened board will consider the impact that that policy would have on the school system's pupils, educational program, personnel, and budget. It comes as no surprise to you, I'm sure, that -- unlike

[__news commentators
__negotiators for teacher unions
__other_____] -- board members and trustees are not born

knowing all they need to know in life. Board members and trustees need information about the operation of the schools -- just as administrators and other members of the management leadership team need to know the board members' rationale for a proposed policy. Functioning as a team of cooperative, communicating human beings, all members can fulfill their respective responsibilities more ably and more expeditiously.

There are certain things that the Board, itself, can do to enhance a workable and working management leadership team. Already mentioned is the sharing of the board's rationale for a proposed study. Other steps to be taken:

- Serve as "agents of change." Demonstrate the willingness to consider and adopt some new patterns of board deliberations; admit that the board does not know everything about all things; seek -- and absorb -- advice from the entire team.

- Insist that all levels of management are included in the decision-making process of the district -- including building administrators. Principals need to be included in the policy gestation phase -- not simply be on the receiving end of the policy formulation process.

- Encourage management training and skills development of school administrators. An administrator's undergraduate and graduate programs probably were inadequate in terms of modern management realities. An effective administrator needs to know more about business administration, education law, psychology, sociology, and communications than most teachers colleges and graduate schools of education currently are providing. The local board should encourage administrators to upgrade their training and skills -- and should allocate the necessary funds for this purpose.

Parenthetically I would like to assert that administrators likewise can take steps to enhance team effectiveness, not the least of which is to make certain that the board is included in the planning process.

I turn now to the National School Boards Association, itself. The National School Boards Association is a federation of state school boards associations representing some 95,000 school board members serving 16,000 school districts throughout the United States. Its policies are set by a Delegate Assembly that meets annually at the NSBA Convention in the Spring. NSBA views the administrative team as central to the well being of education -- particularly in these times of growing unionism among teachers -- and among administrators. In fact, at our convention just eight weeks ago, the Assembly adopted the following resolution:

> NSBA urges state associations to encourage and support local school boards in their creation of an administrative and management leadership team in each school system. In order to fully implement this concept all supervisory, confidential and managerial employees should have the opportunity to initiate, review and recommend policies to the board, thus helping assure sound administration of the school system. Further, employees who are members of the administrative team are urged not to sacrifice their management

leadership role by taking an adversary role against the school board through union organization activities.

In background information provided to the Assembly, it was noted that the "collective bargaining process is usually adversarial in nature. This posture makes it very difficult for board members and employees, on the one hand, to work together in the common aim to provide a quality education for children while, on the other hand, developing bargaining strategies to use against each other." Hence, the involvement of administrators in all levels of policy-making is seen by the NSBA as essential in order to assure the solidarity of the management team.

In addition to action by NSBA's Delegate Assembly, NSBA's commitment to the administrative team and management leadership team concept is evidenced by its participation in the Educational Leaders Consortium. This is a consortium of national professional educational organizations serving school administrators, instructional leaders, board members, and others interested in improving the quality of education. Members include the:

- American Association of School Administrators
- American Association of School Personnel Administrators
- Association of School Business Officials of the United States and Canada
- Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
- Council of Educational Facility Planners International
- National Association of Elementary School Principals
- National Association of Pupil Personnel Administrators
- National Association of Secondary School Principals
- National School Public Relations Association
- and the National School Boards Association.

As was reported in the consortium's maiden newsletter in March 1978, "ELC leaders believe the Administrative Team should be relied upon to improve communication among staff members and serve as a clearinghouse for ideas as educational policies are formulated for recommendation to the Board of Education."

The NSBA regards the ELC as an excellent forum to refine further the general concept of a school district administrative team into a practical, workable, and effective way to administer school districts under the policy governance by school boards. We feel that some of the issues that must be addressed in ELC deliberations on the administrative team are:

- Relationships and roles of the school board, superintendent, administrator in the district organization, and the local professional association of administrators;
- Pattern of communications between and among these four parties; and
- Preservation of administrative responsibility and accountability to the school board through the superintendent.

In closing, I want to reiterate a statement made earlier: "ALL parties in educational management -- central office and building administrators, supervisory and curriculum personnel, and the board -- should participate fully in the business of managing the school district." To facilitate the continued and continuing acceptance of this concept, I issue a challenge. My challenge is one of cooperation -- cooperation by all members of the team in seeing that channels of communication are established and maintained and that information (good and bad, positive and negative, interrogative and declarative) be exchanged freely and frequently; and cooperation internationally, especially between our administrator and board associations.